



PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

FIREWISE USA

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

2025

Prepared by:

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Introduction

The Knolls is located within the Town of Star Valley, Gila County, Arizona. The subdivision development began approximately 32 years ago. The Knolls lies south of Highway 260 and north of the Tonto National Forest. The community consists of 1–3 acre lots, approximately 75% of which contain residential structures.

Because of its proximity to forested lands and the growing wildfire risk across Arizona, The Knolls Property Owners Association (POA) established a Fire Safety Committee in 2021 to enhance fire safety awareness and reduce hazards through resident education and proactive fuel management. The Knolls has proudly maintained Firewise USA Community certification since 2021.

Purpose of this Plan: To document The Knolls' wildfire risk reduction efforts, summarize accomplishments, and outline specific, measurable goals for maintaining Firewise USA certification and continuing to improve wildfire resilience in the coming years.

Community Location

The entrance to The Knolls is located at State Highway 260 and Highline Drive (MP 255), Star Valley, AZ 85541. Coordinates: 34.2479715 – 111.2568170. A community map with fire hydrant locations is included.

Ownership and Community Overview

The Knolls encompasses approximately 230 acres and includes 83 lots (69 developed). All homes are privately owned, single-family dwellings. The estimated full- and part-time population is approximately 145 residents, though this number varies as many homes are second homes.

Community Borders - North: State Highway 260, East: Pine Ridge Community, South: Rim Golf Course Community, West/Southwest: Tonto National Forest.

Community Infrastructure

- **Roads:** Phase 1 streets average 20 feet wide; Phase 2 private streets average 12 feet. Cul-de-sacs vary in size. Ingress and egress remain a key wildfire safety concern. Residents are encouraged to maintain roadside vegetation clearance to ensure access for emergency vehicles.
 - **Water Supply:** The community is served by 20 fire hydrants that meet ISO Level 4 standards, with flow rates of approximately 1,000 GPM.
 - **Fire Protection:** The Hellsgate Fire District Station is less than two miles away, staffed 24/7 with Type 1, 3, and 6 engines and water tenders. Average response time is approximately four minutes.
 - **Construction:** Nearly all homes are of Type 4 construction with Class A roofing. Wood shake roofs are prohibited by community code.
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Community Wildfire Hazard Rating

In July 2021, The Knolls scored **52 points (moderate hazard)** on the Community Wildfire Hazard Severity/Risk Assessment.

Primary areas for improvement:

- Ingress/egress
- Vegetation density and defensible space
- Lot size and topography (limited ability to modify)

Community action priorities:

- Encourage residents to expand defensible space zones to 100 feet where possible.
- Support vegetation thinning to achieve a “Light” rating.
- Promote the use of non-combustible siding, decking, and landscaping materials through ACC guidelines.

Topography and Vegetation

The Knolls borders the Tonto National Forest and contains fuels rated Type 2–5. Vegetation includes manzanita, pinyon and ponderosa pine, scrub oak, cypress, and juniper. Terrain varies from flat to gently sloped knolls.

Climate

- Four-season climate with winter lows in mid-20s and summer highs in the 90s.
 - Annual precipitation averages 21.5 inches, including summer monsoon storms and occasional winter snowfall (ranging from a few inches to over 30”).
 - Fuel growth and fire danger fluctuate annually with precipitation levels.
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Wildlife

Common species include elk, deer, javelina, coyotes, raccoons, squirrels, and various birds. Less common species include bobcats, mountain lions, and Mexican gray wolves.

Fire Regime and History

Wildfires have occurred on nearby state, municipal, and federal lands. While lightning strikes are frequent, human activity remains the leading cause of local fires. The Horton Fire (approximately 20 miles east) serves as a recent reminder of the region’s wildfire vulnerability.

Community Accomplishments

- **Firewise Recognition:** Maintained Firewise USA certification since 2021.
- **Brush Pickup:** Free brush pickup program available to homeowners (suspended in 2025 due to budget but under review for reinstatement in the future).
- **Fuel Reduction:** Ongoing thinning conducted by the Tonto National Forest along approximately 100 yards of adjoining forest boundary.
- **Education & Training:**
 - Nine residents completed the Home Ignition Zone course (2021).
 - Many residents attended multiple community workshops with fire safety demonstrations.
 - Firewise literature and best-practice guides distributed annually.
- **Vegetation Removal (cubic yards):**
 - 2021: 144
 - 2022: 607
 - 2023: 1,374
 - 2024: 12
 - 2025: 3,500
- **Volunteer Hours:**
 - 2021: 342
 - 2022: 926
 - 2023: Not logged (chipper and prescribed fire used).
 - 2024: Contractor and landscaping costs instead of volunteer hours.
 - 2025: 1,122

Community Goals

1. Increase Resident Participation

- Raise Firewise-compliant properties from 30% to 40% by 2027.
- Continue annual Firewise outreach events with participation from Hellsgate Fire Department and DFFM.
- Host community volunteer cleanup days, pairing resident volunteers with HFD and DFFM personnel to assist with mitigation work on approximately three neglected or at-risk properties per year.
- Encourage ACC and homeowner adoption of fire-resistant materials and landscaping standards.

2. Expand Education and Communication

- Distribute Firewise and defensible space literature at least annually.
- Provide fire safety updates via POA website and social media.
- Encourage homeowner enrollment in the DFFM's Home Ignition Zone or Wildfire Preparedness classes.
- Include Hellsgate FD and DFFM Fire Prevention Officers in annual POA meetings and community events.

3. Improve Fuel Management

- Seek grant opportunities to support vegetation removal.
- Coordinate cleanup efforts with HFD and DFFM.
- Encourage voluntary thinning near roadways and evacuation routes.

4. Long-Term Objectives (4–5 Years)

- Maintain Firewise USA certification.
- Hold at least one Firewise Day or combined event annually.
- Track annual volunteer hours, expenditures, and fuel reduction totals.
- Update this Action Plan annually based on results and professional input.

Community Investment

- Required minimum (based on 145 homes): \$290/year
 - 2024 Investment: \$56,000 plus 300 volunteer hours.
 - 2025 Investment: \$103,000 plus 1,100+ volunteer hours.
 - The POA will continue documenting financial and in-kind investments to meet Firewise USA standards, while pursuing cost-effective options and possible grants to support brush pick up and expand mitigation work.
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Community Firewise Day

The Knolls POA will sponsor at least one Firewise-focused event per year, either as a dedicated Firewise Day or incorporated into another community gathering. These events will include educational displays, demonstrations, and opportunities for residents to schedule home assessments.

Future events will emphasize collaboration with Hellsgate Fire Department and DFFM Fire Prevention staff, who will assist with demonstrations, equipment displays, and educational outreach.

Conclusion

The Knolls POA remains firmly committed to wildfire preparedness and the ongoing maintenance of Firewise USA certification. Through continued collaboration with the Hellsgate Fire Department, Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management, and engaged community volunteers, The Knolls will continue building a safer, more resilient neighborhood.

While financial limitations and varied homeowner engagement present challenges, the Board of Directors and Fire Safety Committee are dedicated to education, participation, and sustainable mitigation practices that protect both property and lives.

By maintaining strong partnerships and documenting measurable progress, The Knolls will remain a model Firewise community for years to come.